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A \$50-million biodiesel production facility in Dain City has fallen into receivership.
Page 16

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014

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whether to have a fresh-cut tree or a
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Page 22

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Rink takes shape



GREG FURNINGER/
QMI AGENCY NIAGARA
Noah
Abdelmaksoud
saw the idea
he pitched to
Port Colborne
city council
for an outdoor
skating
rink come
to fruition
Sunday, with
the help
of several
neighbourhood
volunteers.
See story on
page 2.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ COMMUNITY: Noah Abdelmaksoud's rink request starts to take shape



GREG FURNINGER/QMI AGENCY NIGARA

Volunteers help to put together the foundations for a community skating rink at Port Colborne's Chestnut Park.

Port Colborne kids awaiting deep freeze

GREG FURNINGER
Tribune Staff

Noah Abdelmaksoud's rink dreams is taking shape in Port Colborne's Chestnut Park.

It's there that more than a dozen volunteers were hard at work Sunday, including the 11-year-old's hockey teammates, local high school students and parents.

"Seeing all those guys — it's really amazing to see how

everything's coming together," said Noah, his hands caked with mud.

Noah, an 11-year-old Grade 6 student at St. Therese Catholic Elementary School, is the boy who successfully pitched the idea of an outdoor rink to city councillors last month.

Politicians said yes and Noah's idea started snowballing, with city staff rushing on logistics.

Volunteers put in place

in the span of under three hours Sunday the frame of the rink, fashioned with boards normally used for the east-side park's temporary bocce courts.

Frank's Home Hardware Building Centre provided the plastic rink liner and, said Noah's father, Mamdouh, Algoma stripped the field of snow the day prior to make the building exercise that much easier.

"It's really exciting," Dad said of the weekend undertaking. "Other than being muddy, the weather's nice."

"It's been a whole community thing."

Port Colborne High School technology skills teacher Vic Barker helped some of the teens who turned out Sunday. Well, sort of.

"I'm the boss, they're the labourers," he quipped.

Barker recalled skating on

ponds in his younger days, and suggested outdoor skating should be experienced by everyone.

"If we have a winter like last year, it'll be great," he said. "Every town should have this."

The first flooding of the rink — when the mercury dips — will be made with assistance from the fire department.

When the rink is up and running, it's expected that the

neighbourhood volunteers will clean and maintain it. Noah can't wait.

"I love skating. It's fun for everyone."

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Twitter: @GregAtTheTrib



LOCAL NEWS

■ NATIONAL BROADCAST: Former NHLers mingle with crowds at festival-like event

Fans flock to Niagara's Hometown Hockey

KARENA WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

It was the perfect photo for a hockey-loving St. Catharines family's Christmas card.

Three-month-old Gavin decked out in his Toronto Maple Leafs finest, being held by former Leaf star Darcy Tucker.

"If my wife sees this, she'll want another one!" Tucker joked with Gavin's mom, Heather Neal, as they posed for a picture on Church St. in St. Catharines during the Roger's Hometown Hockey festival.

The NHL alum had a steady stream of fans wanting to meet him Saturday during the huge hockey tour downtown that took over a section Market Square, Church St. and James St.

Tucker said travelling across the country with the tour's Scotiabank Community Locker Room has been an eye-opening experience, with different cultural experiences and temperatures, like the -40°C temperature they endured in Brandon, Man.

His favourite part?

"Meeting people and hearing their minor hockey stories," he said. "For me, that kind of fills your heart with warmth. We've got a great future in our game."

Heather Neal said when she read Tucker was going to be downtown, her first thought was to take Gavin to see him. It was a bonus that Tucker asked to hold him.

"Darcy was one of my favourites," said Gavin's dad, Matt. "He played with nothing but heart."

Besides meet-and-greets with NHL alumni, Rogers Hometown Hockey brought live bands, children's activities, puck shooting practice, a ball hockey rink, National Hockey League uniforms and a warming lodge with free hot chocolate to the city core.

It all culminated with Ron MacLean broadcasting live from St. Catharines downtown at 7:30 p.m. Sunday during the pre-game show for the Calgary Flames versus Chicago Blackhawks.

"The crowds have been great," said Sebastian Gatica, senior manager of communications for Rogers Hometown Hockey. After starting next to a lineup of people waiting to meet another ex-Leaf, Shayne Corson, on Sunday afternoon,

"There's lots of fans to be excited about."

St. Catharines was the tenth city in the Rogers Hometown Hockey tour, which plans to hit 25 altogether. Gatica said Sudbury drew the largest crowds last week with 10,000 people, but he predicted St. Catharines would be one of the

top turnouts.

Everything at the event was free from sponsors, with T-shirts for the kids, gloves and hats, autographed pictures, coffee and activities. Nothing was being sold on site.

"This really is about giving back to fans," Gatica said.

"Celebrating the game that connects us all."

Participants young and old were decked out in hockey jerseys from local teams to NHL favourites.

St. Catharines resident Ed Smit had the ultimate accessory — a full-scale imitation Stanley Cup he made by hand 16 years ago because he thought it would be a good conversation piece on his mantle.

"I'm being mobbed," said Smit, an electrician who came from St. Catharines who brought the cup to the event Saturday to show it off a bit and get some photos with NHL alum.

He ended up setting it on a picnic table so dozens of people could pose with it.

"It's a hockey festival. There's no better place, really," he said, adding the Hometown Hockey event was a good thing for the city.

"You don't see a lot of this kind of thing in St. Catharines. It's a huge hockey community. We have the Ice Dogs, the now amateur team, and to get some attention in this community, something other than Niagara Falls. We have a lot of history here and it seems to be coming out this weekend."

Eric Sportel of St. Catharines stopped to pose with the cup and also praised the event.

"Good weather, good turnout. It's a nice local atmosphere," he said. "Having something of this magnitude is good for the city and Niagara region as a whole."

As part of the Hometown Hockey Tour, three local hockey associations — Garden City Minor Hockey Association, St. Catharines Female Hockey Association and CYO — received \$5,000 each from Scotiabank.

Dave Gerow, president of the St. Catharines CYO Minor Hockey, said his association would put the money toward its Just Try It program that provides equipment, ice time and certified instructors to kids who haven't experienced playing the game before, such as new Canadians.

Three other hockey associations and Kiwanis teamed up for a food challenge during the festival that raised more than 2,250 kilograms of donations for Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold.



KAREN WALTER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA
Rogers Hometown Hockey came to downtown St. Catharines Saturday with activities for all ages, including puck shooting practice, a ball hockey rink, air hockey and bubble hockey tables, a warming lodge with hot chocolate, live entertainment and NHL alumni.

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I'VE BEEN THINKING

I've been thinking about Christmas carols

REV. DR. STEVEN DAVIS
Central United Church, Port Colborne

I sat down a few days ago and spent several hours trying to come up with a rotation of Christmas carols to be used in our church services this year.

As I knew would happen (because it always happens) I ended up in a discussion about whether or not we should even be singing Christmas carols during Advent.

For those of you in churches that don't follow the liturgical calendar, Advent is the four weeks of preparation before Christmas Day, and most folks are very adamant that Christmas carols not be used during Advent. Something about the church giving in to the Christmas excesses that start so early now (I've seen artificial Christmas trees on the shelves in August). Maybe there's something to be said for that. When one of our local

radio stations announced that it was playing Christmas music "24/7" (before November was even over) I did sigh a bit — and within a couple of weeks I was getting increasingly tired of *Feliz Navidad*. It's a wonderful song — the first 25 times you hear it a couple of weeks in a row.

But, even if I might be accused of contributing to the Christmas excesses, I still use Christmas carols during Advent — not to buy into the secular Christmas excess, and not just because I like many of them, but because I think there's some very important theology contained in Christmas carols.

If I see a problem in many corners of the church these days it's that even Christians have a very poor understanding of the importance of the incarnation. The incarnation refers to the belief that in the life of Jesus, God became flesh and experienced human life, with all its joys and all its sorrows. To me,

incarnation is central to Christianity. It is the ultimate sign of divine love — that the God who created the universe would love what he created so much that he would choose to become a part of it. That, to me, is love. Incarnation speaks of love. Incarnation is love, and for me, that's what Christmas is all about.

But lots of people don't get it. And it seems to me that Christmas carols are a potential part of the solution.

Over the years I've learned that many people get their basic theological ideas from the songs that they sing or that they've heard. Songs tend to stick in our memories. They influence how we think or how we feel. Some songs can bring tears to people's eyes because they touch our emotions. Some songs can make us think because they challenge us. Christmas carols it seems to me have the opportunity to do both. They remind us of happy times in the past and they help usher us

into a season of good cheer, but they also confront us with the reality of incarnation.

Christmas carols are the only songs we have in the church that really speak passionately and overtly about the divine incarnation in Jesus. If, as a church, we choose to restrict the use of Christmas carols during Advent, during the year then it seems to me that we should hardly be surprised when increasing numbers of Christians doubt the incarnation or at least doubt its importance.

If the songs of incarnation aren't important enough for the church to sing outside the narrow window of Dec. 24 to Jan. 6, then what is the church saying about the importance of the message they contain?

And, in any event, would God really disapprove of singing Christmas carols during Advent? I don't think so. Which is why I spent that time working out a rotation of cards for several services and not just a couple.

Shipwrecks – Fire Chief

SKIPP GILLHAM
For QMI Agency Niagara

The tug *Fire Chief* was aptly named and, for a number of years, was based at Montreal to fight fires both on land and abroad ship.

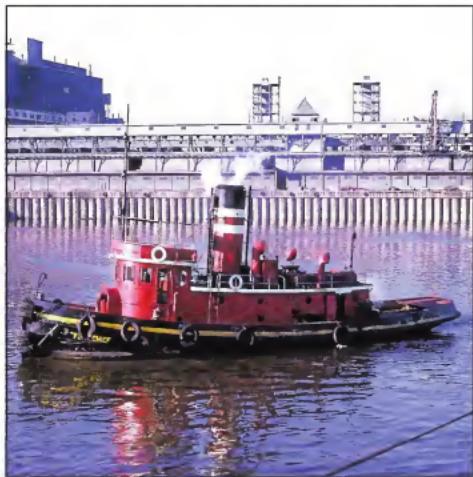
The tug originally served in that capacity at Cleveland under the name *John H. Farley*.

The 27.43-metre-long vessel was completed early in 1884 but on May 9, 1884, it sank at Cleveland and had to be refloated and repaired. The ship then served much more successfully before being sold in

1938 and brought into Canadian registry. Renamed *Fire Chief*, the vessel headed through the Welland Canal for new service at Montreal.

Fire Chief worked both as a towing tug as well as in fire fighting duties. However, on Sept. 13, 1966, the tug ran aground and sank in shallow water in Ville-Marie Bay, Montreal. While refloated, the ship remained idle until being sold for scrap later in the year.

Fire Chief was towed to Kingston in December 1968 and then taken to Hamilton in July 1969 where the hull was broken up by United Metals.



The tugboat Fire Chief is pictured in Montreal on Oct. 17, 1965.

DAVE FREEMAN/COURTESY RENE BEAUCHAMP

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■ QUEEN'S PARK: Omnibus bill drives Niagara's New Democrats to vote against Bill 8

NDP defends rejection of Transparency Act

GREG FURNINGER

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's New Democrat MPPs are defending their decisions to vote against a new law requiring that Ontario's parliamentarians report all their political expenses to taxpayers online.

Both Welland's Cindy Forster and Niagara Falls' Wayne Gates voted to support Bill 8, which passed in the legislature this month, putting into law a requirement also that the voting records of all MPPs be published.

Forster said she and her fellow NDPers are supportive of moves toward improved fiscal transparency, including that expenses for out-of-pocket travel, hotel accommoda-

tion related to that travel, meals and hospitality for all three party leaders, their respective staff and all 107 MPPs be posted on the web.

"Of course we are, they're public dollars," Forster said.

But what she and her colleagues could not support were other components of the omnibus bill. Containing 11 pieces of legislation, she said it was debated in less than four hours.

Some of those pieces, she said, didn't go far enough, which is why she voted against the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act.

"I think people in Ontario won't be fooled by its title," Gates, also condemning it for what he called "flaws," said.

"It's not a transparency bill, it's a Stephen Harper-style omnibus bill," he said. "They throw everything but the kitchen sink in this bill, then they say, 'Hey, look, they're not supportive of health care.'

While the act also extends the role of Ontario's ombudsman to include responsibilities over municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities, it does not give the ombudsman the same responsibilities over health care. Instead, the act will establish a patient ombudsman to respond to complaints about public hospital services, long-term-care facilities and community access centres — but, said Forster, with far less powers, and not over such places as medical clinics and other "areas that

health-care is moving."

While the act gives the provincial advocate for children and youth new powers to investigate children's aid societies, Forster and Gates both said they were not in favour of it. They voted against Bill 8 because it, too, came up short, failing to address other places for at-risk children, including juvenile detention centres and mental health facilities.

And, Forster said, while the act gives the provincial government the ability to implement caps on compensation of executives in such public service organizations as the LCBO, OLG, Northland and others, it does not establish caps.

Forster said the majority government got what it wanted by pushing through with a broad bill.

Her decision not to support Bill 8 based on what she considered big shortcomings prompted a news release to be issued by the Liberals, in which Treasury Board president Deb Matthews, MP for London-North Centre, took direct aim at both of Niagara's NDP members.

"(The) vote by Wayne Gates and Cindy Forster against increased accountability is inexplicable," Matthews said in the release.

"The NDP talks the talk on accountability, but they certainly don't walk the walk."

Forster threw her back at Liberals, saying they should have held themselves after the auditor general's report "released the same day, showed among

various things that the province's debt will hit \$325 bil-

lion at a rate faster than the economy is growing, that Ontario's pension plans are underfunded, that the \$1.9-billion Smart Meter rollout has yet to justify its cost to hydro customers, and that there is no co-ordinated system in place to deliver palliative care services to the dying.

Auditor general Boniface Lysyk also concluded Ontario is spending \$8 billion more than needed on 74 public-private infrastructure projects.

Said Gates of the Liberals upon the release of Lysyk's damning report: "Where's their credibility at all?"

"I'll start my transparency and accountability up against anybody," he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

HOLIDAY WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES



HOLIDAY CHANGES IN WASTE COLLECTION

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Regular Waste Collection Day	Changed to:
Monday, Dec. 22	No change
Tuesday, Dec. 23	No change
Wednesday, Dec. 24	No change
Thursday, Dec. 25	Friday, Dec. 26
Friday, Dec. 26	Saturday, Dec. 27
Monday, Dec. 29	No Change
Tuesday, Dec. 30	No Change
Wednesday, Dec. 31	No Change
Thursday, Jan. 1	Friday, Jan. 2
Friday, Jan. 2	Saturday, Jan. 3



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Niagara Region

POLICE

New radio system way overdue: police association

BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara

A new radio system for the Niagara Regional Police can't come soon enough, the head of the union representing rank-and-file officers says.

"It's one of the most important projects the service will undertake," said Niagara Region Police Association president Cliff Priest. "Without an effective radio system, we cannot provide good policing for the community. It is way overdue."

Niagara Region has approved \$16 million for the new voice radio system, said police board chair Henry D'Angela.

The contract was awarded to Motorola Canada Inc. in August.

The association was in Chicago last week "kicking the tires" of the new system, Deputy Chair Joe Matthews said.

"We've had a chance to do the testing on the system right on the floor at the Motorola shop," Matthews said. "We are doing our best to co-ordinate it with a number of other projects — the most important being the headquarters project."

Matthews said the new system is probably about a year away from being fully operational in vehicles.

"It will roll out in stages and over the next few months," he said. "The testing in the field will continue into the spring and the summer. We hope to be operational at this time next year."

The NRP's current Motorola radio system is antiquated and needs to be replaced. Motorola has told the police that support service for the network infrastructure will

end in 2015.

"This is something we desperately need," Priest said. "We had to take the service to the Ministry of Labour because of the constant breakdown in the radio system. It was publicizing our ability to respond to the public."

"We do not have a say in the new system, but as long as it meets the requirements, we are happy."

The new radio system, known as a P25 voice radio communication system, operates on a 700-megahertz frequency band reserved for public safety and has additional capacity for future growth.

"With that we are getting a state-of-the-art system that will give us the opportunity to partner with other agencies," Matthews said. "We are hoping some of the other public safety agencies will come onto the system and the system has the capacity to support that."

The new system is also expected to provide the NRP with improved coverage, something which has been a problem.

"The Niagara Region government, with the exception of the greater part of urban and rural areas — creates some challenges, but there are guarantees from Motorola that we will get the coverage we need so our officers are in touch," Matthews said.

The system also has GPS-enabled equipment that allows dispatchers to know exactly where front-line officers are at critical times.

"That's the ultimate safety tool," Matthews said.

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■ DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA

Math, special ed key for board chair

DON FRASER

QMI Agency Niagara

For Sue Barnett, it all adds up to one formula for student success: key in on mathematics and push up those scores at District School Board of Niagara.

Although they have improved in the past, the board's recent results from the province's standardized math test have fallen short of expectations.

Last September, applied and academic math results for Grade 9s were three and four percentage points below the provincial standard, respec-

tively. Grade 6 results also slipped this year.

"Improving student achievement (overall) is top of my agenda," said Barnett. "And math is really a priority with the board."

The Welland trustee was recently elected to be DSBN's new chair, replacing Kevin Maves.

On the math front, she spoke of efforts underway. That includes the Dreambox online math program that lets parents access help to assist their children with math.

Money in its approximately \$240-million annual budget has also been set aside for

numeracy-update training for teachers.

"It's made a huge difference," said Barnett, 64, a former teacher who doesn't specialize in math say they find it extremely helpful."

Boosting special education also has a place in her heart.

For years, the board complained its proportionate funding for these programs was unfair compared to what other Ontario boards receive.

That has only recently started being rectified, with additional funding from the Ministry of Education.

"We'll continue to ... try to

get the government to revise its funding formula," she said. "Special needs programming should just be there. It should be available for everyone to use who needs it."

Barnett said ongoing supports for students in areas like mental health also need to continue.

"Let's put stuff in place to make education easier, more accessible, with bigger supports to our staff so they can teach and help."

In this vein, sensible budgeting is also key for trustees, she said.

"Let's be wise with the use of our money," Barnett said.

adding that includes looking for outside sources of income such as DSBN's International students program.

Welland's Maves is a retired lab technician and a grandmother of six.

The chair, first elected trustee four years ago, said accommodation reviews of schools with dwindling enrollment are a painful necessity and part of being fiscally responsible.

"We don't get funded for our use of empty seats," she said. "And it costs us, as you still have to pay all the staff and the bills."

"It is not easy for any community, but you cannot fund a

half-empty school."

Barnett said it's unfair for "other students you're taking money away from" and to the rest of the district.

"I will (especially) never ever vote in favour of triple splits," she said, referring to three grades taught by a teacher in one class. "It's unfair to the children and staff ... how can you learn like that?"

Barnett said board partnerships with municipalities and other public bodies should continue.

Her ideal DSBN: "More money, more schools and forth dialogue — what's good for communities, but also what's good for students."

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You have the right to information regarding this application and to be involved in the process. You can:

- review Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc.'s application on the OEB's website now.
- file a letter with your comments, which will be considered during the hearing.
- become an active participant (called an intervenor). Apply by December 30, 2014 or the hearing will go ahead without you and you will not receive any further notice of the proceeding.
- at the end of the process, review the OEB's decision and its reasons on our website.

LEARN MORE

Our file number for this case is EB-2014-0276. To learn more about this hearing, find instructions on how to file letters, become an intervenor, or to access any document related to this case, please enter that file number at the OEB website: www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/notice. You can also phone our Consumer Relations Centre at 1-877-632-2727 with any questions.

ORAL VS. WRITTEN HEARINGS

There are two types of OEB hearings – oral and written. The OEB will determine at a later date whether to proceed by way of a written or oral hearing.

PRIVACY

If you write a letter of comment, your name and the content of your letter will be put on the public record and the OEB website. However, your personal telephone number, home address and email address will be removed. If you are a business, all your information will remain public. If you apply to become an intervenor, all information will be public.

This rate hearing will be held under section 36 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, S.O. 1998 c.15 (Schedule B).



■ NDCSB

New chair MacNeil seeks openness, best practices

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

Top of mind for Rev. Paul MacNeil at Niagara Catholic District School Board: Fiscal prudence and educational excellence.

MacNeil, a pastor with St. Ann's Parish Fenwick, is the new chair for the Catholic board.

The 49-year-old was acclaimed to the role, replacing former chair Kathy Burnick.



REV. PAUL MACNEIL

"It's a little overwhelming," he said with a laugh. "But I'll see what I can do."

In October, he was also acclaimed as board trustee representing Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln and Pelham.

"I want to work closely with trustees to have a really good discussion and come together," MacNeil said. "We're all on the same page about education and Catholic education."

Those discussions need to be open and honest, he added.

MacNeil said a key part of good education is solidifying the relationship between teacher and student."

He describes asking one teacher what she wanted from the board.

Her response was straightforward.

"She said 'I just want to be in front of the classroom and teach,'" he said. "I see that as a great opportunity and want to capitalize on that — that is what will be best for our kids."

"I also want to be the best employer in Ontario for which to work for."

Last year, the Niagara Catholic board struggled with a deficit and had to dip into its accumulated surplus reserve to keep its finances balanced.

MacNeil said that is a situation that will have to be dealt with.

"It doesn't mean we don't have a problem; we're keeping our eye on it and have to be very careful," he said. "Right now, we have a slight deficit (but it's within) the ministry allowance."

"Definitely, we will have to take a close look at how we manage that, moving forward," he said.

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■ NIAGARA REGION

Caslin vows change as chair

ROB HOULE

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Region's new chair is looking to shake things up.

"I will launch a review of all services and programs delivered by the region," said Caslin said prior to a vote on the chairmanship last Thursday morning. He repeated the pledge later in his inaugural address to council.

"We will keep those that are working, dismantling those that are not, those that are no longer achieving the desired results. This exercise will involve a line-by-line review of the budget to ensure the taxpayers are getting good value for the money."

His win was a rejection of the old guard.

Caslin, who was reelected as a second term as a regional councillor for St. Catharines in October, is a virtual political neophyte compared to the political pedigree of the other candidates for chair.

The secret ballot election among the 30 regional councillors required a simple majority of 16 votes for a win.

In what might be considered a surprise by many, Caslin won on a single ballot, garnering 18 votes. He easily outdistanced a trio of former mayors — incumbent chair Gary Burroughs of Niagara-on-the-Lake (seven votes), Bill Hodgson of Lincoln (three votes) and Henry D'Angel of Thorold (two votes).

The 54-year-old Caslin said the strength of his backing bodes well for the new council.

"It's always great to have that kind of support, and I'm comforted with the fact I have that kind of support around the horseshoe," he said.

"I think it will make for a solid council and solid decisions in the upcoming four-year term."

The vote for chair came soon after the new council was sworn in and nominations were put forth and seconded.

Hodgson was nominated by St. Catharines Coun. Brian Heit and Lincoln Mayor Sandra Easton. Caslin was nominated by Selina Volpati of Niagara Falls and Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs.

Burroughs was nominated by rookie St. Catharines Coun. Debbie MacGregor and West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner, while D'Angel was nominated by Thorold Mayor Ted Luciani and Heit.

Each of the candidates was then given an opportunity to sway their council cohorts.

Caslin touted his leadership experience, noting he was the only candidate with 20 years' manufacturing experience "with a global organization" and before that owned and operated a real estate business.

"I understand the needs of small business and what it takes to be successful."

He said his master's degree in operations management will come in handy.

"Organizational effectiveness is one of my strengths. I rely on a balanced approach to setting clear expectations, developing and executing a plan and measuring those results."

Speaking prior to the vote, Caslin said if elected chair his first order of business would be to look inward, to ensure our organization is operating as efficiently as possible."

He said he would push for the continued waiver of industrial development charges for new businesses and continue to press the Ontario government for regular daily GO rail service to Niagara.

Caslin was the last of the candidates to make his intentions known. He did not publicly declare he was seeking the chair position until two days earlier.

Another candidate, Bruce Timms, announced in an e-mail to fellow regional councillors last Wednesday he was stepping out of the race and throwing his support to Caslin.

Timms, Burroughs, D'Angel and Hodgson had taken part in a debate of candidates organized by eight Niagara chambers of commerce.

Caslin said that although he had been considering a bid for chair since being re-elected Oct. 27, he was still mulling his decision at the time of the debate. In any case, he said, he had a prior commitment that night and would not have been able to participate.

A General Motors employee for 20 years, most recently as facilities manager, Caslin said he was uncertain of his future with the automaker.

"There's lots to be discussed. This is not new for me, so I'm going to have to take some time to have my discussions with GM," he said.

Caslin said he does not see a council divided along political party lines.

"I definitely do not. My supporters are from all stripes of political background."

In his inaugural address to council late last Thursday afternoon, Caslin repeated the themes of his earlier speech

and thanked councillors for putting their trust in him.

"I intend to repay that trust with accountability and effective leadership," he said. "As your regional chair, I pledge to you to open up dialogue on issues that will not let us stand in the way of thinking stand in the way of a good idea or the right thing to do. With strong leadership and honest partnership, we will move Niagara Region forward."

Caslin said he would seek input from all councillors.

"This consultation will begin immediately. We will need to set aside our differences and come together to benefit those who sent us here."

Meanwhile, Caslin moving up to the chair position opens a spot for another regional councillor from St. Catharines.

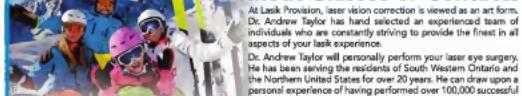
The region will leave the seventh regional council seat up to the City of St. Catharines, which in the past has opted to fill the position with the person who finished eighth.

That was Kelley Edgar, who said last Thursday afternoon he is willing.

"As far as I'm concerned, I can't wait to get up there and get work," Edgar said.

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■ NIAGARA REGION



ROB TYMCZEKIN / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA
Former Regional Chair Gary Burroughs speaks says he is disappointed but not surprised that he wasn't returned to the position of chair. He was defeated on the first ballot by Al Caslin of St. Catharines 18 to seven.

Burroughs disappointed but not surprised

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

He made history, although not in the

fashion he would like.

Gary Burroughs became the first Niagara Region chair seeking re-election to not regain the job.

He lost out last Thursday by a wide margin in a first-ballot vote as the new order of business for the region's new council. Burroughs finished second to Al Caslin of St. Catharines, 18 votes to seven.

Burroughs, who left chambers quickly at the conclusion of the meeting, said he was disappointed to lose, although not surprised.

He said he did not see the loss as a personal reflection on his leadership.

"I'm looking on it as a change in the way politics happens at our little local level, and no more than that," Burroughs said. "It used to be 30 people just making a decision, without a lot of pre-work done."

"So I don't take it personally. I actually wouldn't do anything in the last four years any differently than I did. I feel good about what has been accomplished."

Asked if he thought partisan politics came into play, Burroughs was non-committal.

"That will be up to the people who voted for Mr. Caslin — I don't even want to go there."

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LOCALNEWS

BUSINESS

Good year for seaway shipping

DON FRASER

QMI Agency Niagara

St. Lawrence Seaway cargo shipments for this year are expected to top 2013's totals, powered by a surge in grain exports and steel imports.

St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. reported its total shipments reached 34.6 million tonnes from March 25 to Nov. 30.

That's up 5% over the same period last year, and it's anticipated the shipping season will surpass last year's by a similar margin.

Seaway market development director Bruce Hodgson said a brutal winter meant the loss of about four weeks of shipping due to ice conditions.

"But then we rebounded, with grain continuing to be strong. And we expect it should remain strong until the end of the season," he said.

Hodgson said the grain crop last year was a record one, with a "huge amount of carryover that was left in the system."

"And it was decent quality ... so once we got rid of the ice, we had a very strong start."

and the Suez Canal were at 10.1 million tonnes, up 44% over 2013. That's the most Canadian grain shipped through the seaway for that period in 13 years.

Exports of grain through ports like Hamilton and Port Colborne are also up signifi-

cantly this fall.

Meanwhile, boosted activity in construction and automotive manufacturing in Canada and the U.S. pushed up steel shipments by 80% this season to 2.2 million tonnes.

"Steel has been strong," said Hodgson. "The U.S. economy has shown good signs of recovery and a big part of what's driving our iron and steel is the auto sector, which continues to be strong."

The seaway says nearly two million tonnes of new business also helped offset decreases that otherwise took place in iron ore and coal shipments this year.

"This certainly (positively) impacts our tolls and revenue," Hodgson said. "And we



BOB TYMCZYSZYN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

The ship Resko makes it's way through the Welland Canal at Lock 3 in St. Catharines at the end of October. The Seaway expects more cargo to move in 2014 than in 2013.

are seeing next year continue to be strong for the iron and steel business."

slated to close on New Year's Eve at 4 p.m. and is expected to reopen sometime in mid to

took place Jan. 1 at 2 p.m.

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Twitter @don_standard

A JYSK Christmas catalog page. At the top left is the JYSK logo with the slogan 'BED • BATH • HOME'. The date 'Dec 18 - 24, 2014' is above it. To the right is a large, stylized text 'Save 30-60% off All Christmas Decor*' with a starburst effect. Below this, there's a note: 'Includes all remaining in-stock Christmas figures based on individual availability. Lighting, ornaments, trees and inflatables. Stock will vary by store. Limited quantities. No returns.' In the center, there's a scene with Santa Claus, two children, and a reindeer. To the left, there's a section for 'THE PERFECT GIFT' with a 'GIVE A JYSK GIFT CARD' offer. A 1/2 PRICE badge is shown next to a small Santa figurine. Below this are various Christmas items like a candle lantern, ornaments, and a Santa figurine. A 'SAVE 60%' badge is shown next to a Santa figurine. To the right, there's a section for '1/2 PRICE' with a '10 M Wrap' offer. A 'SAVE 50% off Christmas Wrap & Gift Bags' badge is shown next to a roll of wrapping paper.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **HEALTH:** Senior celebrates 97th birthday in aquafit class

'You have to keep moving'

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Like many members at the Niagara Centre YMCA, Gilberte Fournier hops in the pool at least three times a week.

Aquafit is her workout of choice and she knows the moves better than most.

When the music gets underway, she shows no signs of slowing.

But there's one important factor that sets the Welland resident apart from others hitting the gym looking to stay fit.

On Nov. 25, Fournier turned 97.

Staff at the Welland facility held a celebration Tuesday to mark not only the retired educator's birthday, but also

her commitment to staying active.

She is not only the oldest member of the Rose City's YMCA, but also the oldest YMCA member in all of Niagara.

It just so happens it was a near-death experience that prompted Fournier to make the life-changing decision to join the YMCA in 1979.

Only weeks before, during

a visit to Mexico, she slipped beneath the water and struggled to surface.

Returning to Canada frightened but unscathed, she was determined to learn how to swim.

Fournier signed up for lessons at the former YMCA facility on East Main St. and never again shied away from

the pool.

"Then the day came when I couldn't swim anymore. I wasn't strong enough," she recalled.

But that did not discourage her.

She instead began taking aquafit classes, moving at her own pace and setting her own difficulty level.

Fournier relies on assistance from a cane when walking, but in the water her body is able to find an unmatched freedom.

"I can't stand for longer than two minutes sometimes, but in the pool it's different," she said.

"When I get out, I feel so good. That's why I come."

In the '70s, Fournier was recommended for knee

replacement surgery, but she declined and instead used the pool as a form of therapy.

"I never got the operation," she said with a laugh, while adding the weekly pool time, which she enjoys thanks to daughter-in-law Cynthia Fournier who drives her to classes, has been good for her joints.

She admitted it's not always easy pushing herself to get out of the house and into the water.

"Sometimes I have to pinch myself to get out, but I do."

"I want to stay well," Fournier said.

"I don't want to stay in bed for years, so I do what I can."

Her advice, offered with



MARYANNE FIRTH/STAFF PHOTO

Gilberte Fournier, 97, participates in aquafit classes three times a week at the Niagara Centre YMCA in Welland. She is the oldest YMCA member in Niagara.

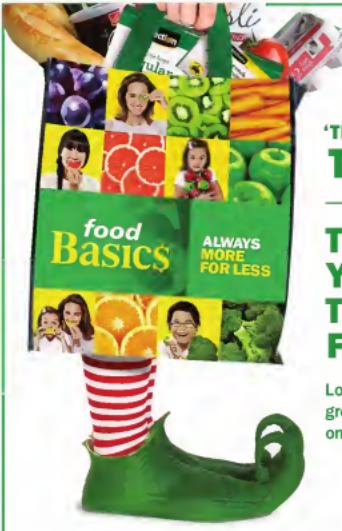
Fournier is believed to be 97. "She's so full of life," she said, while calling her an inspiration for members of all ages at the facility.

"Life goes by very fast," Fournier said.

"You might as well enjoy every day."

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca

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■ RECREATIONAL CANAL



MARIANNE FIRTH / STAFF PHOTO

Welland International Flatwater Centre is getting new dragon boats thanks to an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

Bring on the dragons

DAN DAKIN
OMA Agency Niagara

There will be a whole lot of new dragons floating down the Welland Recreational Canal next year.

Welland Recreational Canal Corp. has been awarded a \$123,800 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to buy nine new dragon boats for Welland International Flatwater Centre.

The boats will arrive in time for the 2015 Canadian National Dragon Boat Championships in June.

"Being such large boats, they're not something you can move around, so having that asset in Welland is a huge competitive advantage for us over other venues," said WRCC executive director Stephan Fischer.

The boats will also be used during Dragon Boat Niagara 2015, a combination of the International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships and the Pan American Club Creon Dragon Boat Championships, which are expected to draw a combined 5,000 participants to the Welland waterway next summer. Another 2,000 athletes are expected to take part in the national championships in June.

The dragon boats being purchased are made of 20-person and 10-person international standard boats. In dragon boat racing, teams don't bring their own boats to competitions, but race in a boat provided by them.

Fischer said the new boats have a life span of about 20

years and will help attract more dragon boat races to Welland in the future.

"The hope is we will be able to solidify a long-term relationship with Dragon Boat Canada for hosting camps, clinics and national and international events," he said, referring to the sport's governing body in Canada.

Chloe Greenough, executive director of the organization, said her organization is hoping for the same thing.

"It's pretty exciting for us because the course in Welland is arguably the best in Canada and one of the best in the world," she said. "It's a great flatwater centre for sprinters for traditional sports, but unlike many centres, it suits us all, as well."

Greenough said there are now 85,000 dragon boaters in Canada.

"We grow every year," she said. "To have a community making such an investment in making this a go-to place for dragon boating, and to have us be a part of that is super exciting."

The boats will also be made available for local events, such as the Welland Dragon Boat Festival.

Part of the grant money will also be used to buy permanent, outdoor storage containers to keep the boats on-site at WIFC.

"The biggest thing is what we can do long term (with the grant)," Fischer said. "We can become a home for dragon boat racing."

Fischer said the new boats have a life span of about 20



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Biodiesel plant's future uncertain

DAN DAKIN
Globe and Mail

A \$50-million Welland biodiesel plant heralded as the future of the clean fuel industry has gone into receivership and will be sold to the highest bidder.

Court documents confirm Toronto-based KPMG has been appointed receiver for Great Lakes Biodiesel (GLB), along with associated companies Einer Canada and Biovercel Trading.

It's the latest chapter in the rocky history of Great Lakes Biodiesel, which opened a production facility on St. Clair Dr. in Welland's Dain City at the end of 2012 to convert canola and soybean oil into biodiesel.

The receivership is the result of court action by Luxembourg-based investment company Heridge SARL, which said in court it was only repay half of a \$20-million loan used to get GLB's Welland plant off the ground.

Heridge has now submitted a bid to purchase all assets of GLB, including the Welland plant that still employs 16 people.

The plant is not currently in operation, according to court documents. It is being maintained, though, so it can immediately go back into production once more feedstock used to make biodiesel can be purchased to get things rolling when a new owner arrives.

"The plant itself, accord-

ing to the folks I've spoken to across the industry, is state-of-the-art and is a very valuable asset," said Welland MP Malcolm Allen.

"I hope if someone else will step up to the plate and take it over, that seems very likely."

A judge at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice appointed KPMG as the receiver in early October. A former director of GLB and its associated companies argued in court the \$20-million loan was directed to a third party and never given to the plant.

Justice Laurence Patillo disagreed, and the receivership moved forward, court documents show.

According to the documents, that \$20-million loan was used by GLB both to build the Welland production facility in 2012 and to secure a commitment from the federal government for \$65 million in funding to help the plant compete with Canada's \$1.5-billion ecoENERGY fund, designed to kickstart the country's biodiesel industry.

A representative from St. Catharines MP Rick Dykstra's office confirmed GLB was initially approved for the funding in the end of 2011, but was never given any of the money.

Allen said he believed GLB might have been relying on the funding to make its business model work.

"Entering the market with out being able to support yourself by other means, obviously is a difficult enterprise to get yourself established," he said. "It looks like the (business model) they chose was less effective than others and they got themselves into a difficult spot."

It started its \$65-million ecoENERGY agreement in October 2013, on the basis GLB had failed to fully commission the biodiesel plant according to the regulations.

The court documents show company officials appealed earlier this year and Natural Resources Canada reopened the talks with GLB, but suspended them again in July as a result of a criminal investigation related to Customs Act violations involving Biovercel Trading.

The investigation, being handled by Canada Border Services Agency, remains open and before the courts, CBSA Quebec regional office spokesman Dominique McNeeley confirmed Thursday.

The CBSA raided the Toronto offices of Biovercel in May, 2012 during an investigation into shipments of biodiesel from Quebec City to Europe in 2009 and 2011.

"There is nothing public we can say about this case at this time," McNeeley said.

Allen said he believed GLB might have been relying on the funding to make its business model work.

"Entering the market with out being able to support yourself by other means, obviously is a difficult enterprise to get yourself established," he said. "It looks like the (business model) they chose was less effective than others and they got themselves into a difficult spot."

A former employee spoke to MNI Agency Niagara on the condition of anonymity because he had signed a non-disclosure agreement when he was hired, and subsequently let go by the company.

He said not getting the federal funding was a major blow.

"Once the government pulled their funding, it made it iffy," he said. "Since Day 1, it was a lack of money. Once I heard they weren't going to get funding from the government, I started looking for a job."

On Monday, the court accepted an opening bid from Heridge for three parts of GLB's assets: the Welland and the 16-acre piece of land it's built on, the equipment and inventory, and all remaining assets.

All bids for the assets must be made to KPMG by Jan. 7. As additional bids come in, the assets will be sold in an auction. Once all potential bids are received, Heridge will take over ownership.

A Heridge spokesperson, who asked not to be identified, said Saturday the company wants to keep the plant running.

"Once they own it, they would be working very hard to see the plant come into production. It would be a great outcome for them and for our community," the person said.

"With 170 million litres, it's one of the largest plants in Canada, but it's very hard to judge the potential at this

GREAT LAKES BIODIESEL

By the Numbers

170 million — biodiesel

production capacity, in litres

Welland plant: 8.5 million — storage

capacity on-site, in litres

16 — acres the plant is

built on

17 — number of

employees currently

working on site

17,600 — square footage

of production and office space

65 million — amount of

money originally committed

to GLB by the federal

government

0 — amount of money given

to GLB from the federal

government

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ducers in Ontario is that the provincial government only requires 0.6% of most diesel to be made up of biodiesel. In most other provinces, 2% is required.

He said the demand should be up when the mixture requirement goes up at the end of 2015.

At the GLB plant in Welland recently, numerous employees could still be seen entering the building and about a dozen cars were in the large gravel driveway.

An employee at the front desk advised a reporter seeking comment to contact KPMG.

Reached by phone at the Welland facility, the plant manager also said he couldn't comment and suggested contacting KPMG. Clifton Prophet, who is listed as one of the two lawyers from the Toronto-based law firm representing GLB, said comments should be directed to KPMG.

The KPMG contact listed for GLB fielded all questions from the media should be directed to Phil Reynolds, the KPMG partner for restructuring and turnaround. Multiple calls and e-mails to Reynolds were not returned.

E-mail and phone calls requesting comment from former GLB officials named in the court documents were also not returned for this story.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ COMPETITION: Only Canadian site in international race that could see 100,000 runners

Red Bull releases Niagara Falls run map

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

The Niagara Falls edition of the Wings for Life World Run is shaping up to be an international

event.

The second-ever Red Bull-backed World Run will be held

simultaneously in more than 35 locations around the world May 3, 2015, including the only Canadian site in Niagara Falls.

The unique event will see tens of thousands of runners competing against each other in all weather conditions.

They'll all start at the exact same time, at 7 a.m., EDT and will try to outrun catcher cars, which will take off from the start line 30 minutes after the runners.

The cars will all travel at exactly 15 km/h. At set intervals, all the catcher cars around the globe will increase their speed until the overall men's and women's winners are declared.

More than 35,000 runners competed around the world in 2014, with the top male covering 78.6 kilometres and the top female covering 54.8 kilometres before being caught.

The top Canadian man and woman covered 46.7 kilometres and 33 kilometres respectively.

After approximately 200 people took part in the inaugural Canadian event in Saskatoon, Sask. last year, Red Bull estimates 1,500 will take part in the Niagara Falls race and as many as 100,000 worldwide.

Organizers said Monday registration for the local event is well ahead of 2014. So far, runners from Canada, the U.S., Trinidad, Taiwan, Ireland and Turkey have signed up.

The event is a fundraiser for the Wings for Life spinal cord injury research foundation. Entry fees are \$40 until Jan. 1, when they go up to \$60. All of that money will be donated directly to the foundation.

As for the route, because there's no way to know how much distance runners in each location will cover, organizers

RED BULL WINGS FOR LIFE WORLD RUN

May 3, 2015

BY THE NUMBERS

100,000	— The expected field around the world
1,500	— Expected field in Niagara Falls
40	— Race venues on six continents
4.1	— Millions of dollars raised in 2014
100	— Route distance in kilometres planned for Niagara Falls

ers must design routes that cover 100 kilometres and are as flat as possible.

In Niagara Falls, the race will start in front of the Horseshoe Falls and then go south along the Niagara River Parkway all the way to Netherby Rd., which marks the 20 kilometre point.

From there, it heads toward Welland on Moyer Rd., then turns north again into rural Niagara Falls. The route goes back south to Netherby, then heads north again just past 55 kilometres, where it turns north on Moyer Rd. and eventually east on Chippawa Creek Rd.

Should anyone make it past the 70 kilometre mark, the route heads past Niagara Square and into the heart of Niagara Falls.

Canadian winners will get free trips to any of the 2016 Wings for Life World Run locations. To register, visit www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com.

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Ryan King of Canada competes during the Wings for Life World Run in Saskatoon, Canada on May 4. Red Bull has announced the 2015 Canadian World Run race will be held in Niagara Falls on May 3.

JOHN EVELY / SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY NIAGARA



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**Tickets for Fiddler ready
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People trying to find the perfect holiday present for lovers of live theatre

are in luck.

Tickets are on sale for Port Colborne Operatic Society's upcoming production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The show hits the stage at Lakeshore Catholic High School's auditorium

Saturday, Feb. 14, with seven performances running until Sunday, March 1.

The Broadway favourite, which marks the operatic society's 70th annual musical production, is set in the small Russian village of Anatevka in the early 1900s.

It centres on Tevye, a poor dairyman, and his efforts to protect his five daughters and his traditions from a changing

world.

Reserved seats are \$20. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Roselawn Centre box office, 296 Fielden Ave. or by phone at 905-834-7572.

For more information and a full list of show dates, visit www.portcolborneoperaticsociety.com.

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Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Canada for both men and women, but it is surprisingly treatable if detected early; hence the importance of the colorectal screening procedure. Beginning at 50 years of age for those at average risk of developing colorectal cancer, a simple at-home stool test – the Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) – should be completed and repeated every two years. However, if you have a first-degree relative with colon cancer, your screening should begin about 10 years younger than the age at which they were diagnosed. (For instance, if your close relative was 50 years old when diagnosed, you should begin screening when you turn 40) and it is advised that a colonoscopy be performed. At this point in time, colonoscopy is the gold standard for the detection of any abnormalities of the colon, such as polyps, that may eventually become cancerous if not appropriately treated or removed. It should be noted that most colonoscopies do not result in a diagnosis of cancer. The purpose of these screening procedures is to look for signs that could eventually progress to that and remove them before they pose a problem. It's all about prevention!

Many people have the idea that a colonoscopy is a painful experience. This should not be the case. The patient is most often well-sedated and unaware of the procedure unless they request to wake. Likely, the most discomfort the patient will experience is during the day before the procedure, because they are required to consume an all-liquid diet and then take a laxative to clear out the bowel. One day of hunger and slight discomfort is surely worth having the procedure done properly!

There are some signs and symptoms to be aware of that may indicate there is a problem in the colon. These include blood in the stool or black-coloured stool, long-narrow shaped stools, abdominal cramping, or unexplained weight loss. If you are currently experiencing any of these symptoms or you notice these changes, don't delay talking to your doctor.

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LOCAL NEWS

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REAL OR FAKE?

'You need the smell of a real tree'

ALISON LANGLEY
Mall Agency Niagara

It's a debate that's been raging for decades.

Some people enjoy the convenience of an artificial tree while others opt for the traditional real tree.

For Don Wallace and Dave Kiltiy, the answer is simple — nothing beats a real tree in the house for the holidays.

"It's not Christmas without a real tree," Kiltiy said.

"You need the smell of a real tree," Wallace added.

The two men are members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Club on Drummond Rd. The service club has been selling Christmas trees to the public for more than 50 years.

This year, the club ordered more than 700 trees including Scotch pine, Fraser fir and balsams.

Generations of families have picked up a tree from the Lions over the years and Kiltiy said many take their time to find that perfect tree.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, approximately one million Christmas trees are harvested at more than 500 Ontario Christmas tree farms each year.

Purchasing a real Christmas tree in Ontario is not only good for the environment, and Ontario's economy, it also brings families together and creates memories you will cherish forever," said Shirley Brennan, executive director of Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario.

Countrywide, the industry was valued at \$53.2 million in 2013.

The Canadian Institute for Statistics Canada, represents a 6.1% increase from \$52.1 million in 2012.

Canadian Christmas trees are exported across the world including to Japan, Barbados and the Netherlands, turning it into oxygen."

A natural Christmas tree is 100% recyclable and can be chipped and turned into a nutrient-rich mulch.

Fake trees are made with polyvinyl chloride, a nonrenewable, petroleum-derived plastic. They will not break down in a landfill.

However, fake trees are reusable and can be kept for many years if handled and stored properly. They are also flame-retardant and easy to assemble.

CHOOSING A TREE

The Lions Club offers the following tips:

- Cut one to two centimetres off the tree stump to eliminate the seal and to allow the tree to absorb water.

- Place the tree in a stand that can hold one gallon of water. Top up the water twice daily so the base of the tree never dries out.

- Use the smallest lights possible to prevent a build-up of heat.

- Place the tree away from heat sources such as vents, fireplaces and sunny windows.

The Niagara-Hamilton area and central Ontario are most in favour of the environmental merits of real trees — more than 60% of respondents in each region selected real trees as their choice this holiday season.

The Greater Toronto Area was the only region of the province that had a higher response in favour of artificial trees.

Real trees are also a far better choice for the environment, according to Forests Ontario, a nonprofit agency created in 2014 as a result of the merging Trees Ontario and the Ontario Forestry Association.

"Christmas tree farms play an important role in supporting healthy ecosystems and human health," said Rob Keen, CEO of Forests Ontario.

"These trees provide wildlife habitat protection for small birds and animals and to all of us, they're literally a breath of fresh air. They act as air pollution filters, soaking up carbon dioxide emitted by cars, planes and homes, turning it into oxygen."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ PETS: Cats and dogs are part of the family

Santa poses with his four-legged friends

GREG FURNINGER

(QMI Agency Niagara)

Ho, ho, ho and woof, woof
woof — pictures with Santa
are going to the dogs.

And cats. But really, the concept isn't
new.

Wendy and Bart Evans have
always taken their pets to have
photos taken with the man in
red.

"These are my kids," said
Wendy as the two dogs she
and Bart inherited two years
ago were about to be photo-
graphed at Seaway Mall,
which was giving \$1 to
Welland and District Humane
Society for each image pur-
chased.

Photos have been taken
of five other family pets in
the past, including two cats



adopted from the animal
shelter. They're put on display
during the holidays.

"I have one dog who opens
all the Christmas gifts," Wendy
says with a smile — lightheart-
edly indicating that doesn't
mean waiting until Christmas
morning.

Her pets are part of her
family.

"Look at how much is spent
on treats and clothes," she
notes.

Sylvia McCutcheon brought
her three-year-old Yorkiepoos
Missy to the mall Saturday
to have her first photo taken

with Santa.

"I think it's going to be
cute," she said while express-
ing appreciation some mon-
keys would go to the humane
society.

Waggin' Walks was also at
the two-hour photo-op that
started at 8 a.m., selling treat
for which a portion of pro-
ceeds would go to the local
shelter.

McCutcheon expected
her pet to do well with the
bearded stranger topped in a
red hat.

"As long as Santa rolls him-
self in chicken, she'll be good,"
she quipped.

There was no need for that.

Missy sat still — far better
than some screaming, crying
children Santa has had to deal
with in recent weeks — and
the photo session was over in

a matter of a couple of min-
utes.

The attentions of cats and
dogs were attempted to be
captured by employees of the
company taking photos by
calling their names, whistling
and shaking a tiny tambou-
rine.

The experience for Santa
and his four-legged friends, said
the bearded one early on, "will be a little different."

Most of the early arrivals
at the mall kept calm as they
waited. No loud meows or
barks to be heard.

The five-month-old cocka-
poo of Carolyn Hann and her
boyfriend, was among the
quiet pack.

"Right now he's our baby,"
Hann said of Murphy.

"They see us as family, so
why not treat them the same."



GREG FURNINGER/
STAFF PHOTO:
Missy, the
three-year-
old Yorkiepoos
of Sylvia
McCutcheon,
has her
picture
taken with
Santa at
Seaway Mall
Saturday
morning.

greg.furninger@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @GregATheTrib

"It's like a tradition in my
family. All of our dogs have
come to see Santa."



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LOCAL NEWS

This year I'm skipping Christmas

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

You probably don't know Utah's Lisa Henderson, just another momma blogger writing about mommy stuff. Co-founder of the saccharine sweet website Over the Big Moon.

But aside from Bill Cosby, she might be this month's most hated person on the Internet because she had the audacity to cancel Christmas this year for her entitled, spoiled sons. No gifts from Santa. Everything going towards more needy children and causes.

"We are trying to teach them the pleasure of giving rather than continuing to feed their childhood desire for more," she wrote, before the backlash hit.

That makes her a villain? This woman is my hero this month.

You see, before Henderson's blog was even posted Nov. 24, my gal and I also made the difficult decision to cancel Christmas this year. While she's in school we're a one-income household. The line between paycheque and expenses is now razor thin. Add a steady parade of car repairs and vet

bills, and it's a perfect storm of household misery.

It's a decision difficult stretches like this you realize what a financial and emotional drain Christmas can be. It wasn't easy, but we had to say no this year.

To be honest, I've been feeling burned out on Christmas for a while. Maybe a year off will recharge some festive batteries, because the burden of the season has been sapping whatever joy there's supposed to be.

Yes, the family time in Windsor is great. But to get there meant more debt, more stress, more exhaustion every year. I can't remember the last Christmas I didn't leave my family feeling wiped.

Is this what the day is supposed to be about? Sorry, I'm tapped out.

Which is why Henderson's blog struck the right note. She isn't ignoring Christmas; she's changing what it means in hopes her kids gain some perspective. Her family held a clothing drive in their neighbourhood. Their letters to Santa will ask him to find someone who needs or deserves their gifts more. They will understand giving more than receiving.

When the feedback started pouring in, she added her kids "are in no way hurting for things." It sounds like I took Christmas away from tiny Tim here, folks.

The kids, in fact, are on board with this retooled Christmas: "They are learning exactly what we wanted them to learn, because they are not moping around feeling sorry for themselves. They are thinking of others."

It should be noted, her kids are getting gifts from the grandparents — but Santa will be bypassing their house Christmas Eve.

Henderson had to close the comments on her blog. I imagine she deleted the most vicious responses. I hope she hangs in there, because rejecting the narrative is never easy.

Tradition dictates you spend and gorge yourself. Hell, I like that idea. Hell, our economy depends on it. Saying "No" to this two-month ordeal — especially when you have the means to continue feeding it — is bravo-free perch, admittedly.

There's one YouTube video that makes the rounds every Christmas that infuriates me. The parents film their insufferable brat as he unwraps



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It's not easy to skip Christmas, but John Law is taking a pass this year. And considering the stress and chaos this single holiday creates, he wonders why more people don't do it.

books on Christmas morning and throws a pint-size fit. "What the heck is that," he says while mom cackles with laughter. "That's not toys, that's books!"

He then pretends to spit on them.

"I don't get books for Christmas. I hate it."

Every time I watch, I want to reach into the screen and

set fire to everything under their tree.

So this is Christmas? Sorry, Santa. We need a time out.

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LeafSource STOPS PAIN WITHIN DAYS!

"It works! I'll take another two bottles please!"

This coming from a customer who had tried every other natural remedy under the sun in the past few years to take away her pain. Ian, the owner of The Healthy Cupboard couldn't believe his ears. He had finally found the perfect product to stop his customer's misery. This is what every owner of a health food store dreams about, a natural product that receives so many outstanding testimonials on such a wide variety of health issues. "I had recommended a new product called LeafSource, which we recently started carrying. We have had tremendous success with this product, and almost everyone we have recommended it to over the last few months has come back and thanked us over and over again," said Ian. Before trying LeafSource, the woman had complained about her ongoing joint pain and was at her wits end. Although she had explored some natural products and the numerous natural remedies she had tried over the years, the pain would never fully go away. "She returned to my store, in tears, less than one week after buying LeafSource. I didn't know what

to make of this woman standing in front of me crying, until she told me that within a few days of taking LeafSource her pain started to disappear and within a week it was completely gone - as if it was never there." Ian goes on, "This coming from a woman whose pain plagued joints and ongoing arthritis was bad just one week earlier that the pain was unbearable but now has completely subsided." By now you are probably wondering what is LeafSource and why is it so effective? LeafSource is a 100% natural product, derived from a proprietary organic mineral composite with over ten years of university research. LeafSource helps regulate the inflammatory process and the body's ability to repair itself. The vast majority (70 - 80%) of the population over the age of 50 have joint problems — often called osteoarthritis. This is when the cartilage on joints that develop over time begins the aging process. With joint inflammation, movement is limited and pain can be constant. LeafSource seems to have the ability to help people get their mobility

and zest for life back. Millions of people seek treatment for their joint and inflammation problems by resorting to expensive, toxic prescription drugs (i.e. NSAIDs) with multiple side effects. These range from nausea and vomiting to serious intestinal disorders (bleeding, gas pain) and even heart and liver failure. Isn't that too large a price to pay for a little pain relief? LeafSource is a safe alternative to these destructive anti-inflammatory drugs that cause more problems than they solve. There are absolutely no side effects and it doesn't interfere with any other medications. Controlled experiments and observations have revealed that LeafSource is a potent antiinflammatory that has been shown to bring a reduction to inflammation and pain within a few days. People notice great results in terms of more energy and less pain by taking anywhere from 1 to 3 capsules per typical maintenance. It usually 1 capsule twice daily. This product gets results! LeafSource is scientifically validated through more than 10 years of research at 4 universities, including the Department of

Pharmaceutical Sciences, Mercer University. Aside from its incredible anti-inflammatory and pain reducing ability, it has also been shown to improve the performance of your daily nutrition and vitamin programs. It helps increase the absorption of vital nutrients, which in turn helps these nutrients work better. Better nutrition = better results! It's almost as if they have become supercharged! LeafSource has also been shown to help enhance energy levels, improve intestinal health, strengthen hair, skin and nails and improve immune function. To see someone go from intense pain to a new lease on life within a week is

truly incredible. Imagine being able to move freely without pain. Who wouldn't want to get out of bed in the morning with more energy? It's amazing how much of this stuff we take for granted, until it's gone! Ian adds, "I often recommend that LeafSource be taken with other natural joint products in order to help them work better and provide even faster relief. One of the things I hear most often from people who have tried LeafSource is they just plain feel better, have more energy and less pain. We're so confident, we guarantee LeafSource 100%. That alone should be enough to try this incredible product."

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